

Before Light

Genesis 1:1-2

Let us start with a paraphrase and walk back from that. Doing this, we will have an idea as to where we are going. I will return quickly to the literal translation as I go.

“The first thing God did was bring space and particles into existence. But everything was dark and chaotic. The Spirit stepped in to organize the chaos, using the laws of physics to form a huge ball of water.”

Though we could just assert “God did it” and be on to other things, many among us are curious as to how He did it. For this reason, by “thinking God's thoughts after Him”, we can take His revelation “word for word” and see where it takes us.

The first phrase, two words in the original language, is printed in modern Hebrew as **בְּרֵאשִׁית** – b'reoshiyth. The “re'oshiyth” is a feminine form of the noun “r'osh”, which means “head”. It has many meanings but the idea is to be “first” or “highest” in rank. With no definite article, the closest English phrase for this is “At first”, where “at” is one of the nuances of the preposition “B” (in, at, with, etc). The phrase that begins the Bible is found elsewhere only in the historical portions of the book of Jeremiah. In that book, the prophets secretary writes in four place “In the beginning of the reign of [the] King”. This is always a period set apart to set things in order for ruling the people. Solomon spent this time getting the temple built.

The word used for God is **אֱלֹהִים** – **Elohim**. This is a plural form, though there is only one Creator. The word comes from *Eloh*, which comes from the basic *El*. All three forms are used in referring to God. The basic root for El is *eyl*, meaning “strong, or mighty”. The plural form is identical to the dual form, which is sometimes used for emphasis. In this case, this name for God would mean “He who is very strong. With this in mind, the events of creation week could have been one continuous “miracle” with no need for analysis. However, since mankind was created “in the image of God”, He has directed us to think about what He has done.

Now we come to the very important verb—translated “created”. Of the words used in the creation account for God's activity, the verb **בָּרָא** (bara) is used most sparingly. Oddly, but perhaps revealingly, when relating the events of creation in the fourth commandment, God tells Moses—and us—that He “made” (Heb: **עָשָׂה** `asah) the heavens, the earth and all that is in them (Exodus 20:11). *Barasis*, to coin a special word for this “creating”, is a forming by cutting, or carving. It is only used once of mankind, and that is in the account of the “sons of Joseph” (the majority of what became the

northern kingdom) as Joshua was allotting land among the captured cities during the conquest (see Joshua 17:14ff). To these men, who did not want preexisting buildings, Joshua told to “cut down” the woods and build their own towns. The translators wisely did not go with “create your own land”, leaving the absolute creating in the hands of the LORD. The point is, the creation of the original material, it seems, was to be, as it were, a “block” from which everything else was formed.

With this in mind, let us look at the words used in this section before God spoke a word. That which is created is said to be “the heaven(s) and the earth”. In this first verse, the definite article is used for both, following the indicative particle *אֵת* ('at, pronounced *eth*), that is not translated. In particular, the word for heaven is *שָׁמַיִם* (*shamayim*) which literally means a “lofty place”. As it is in a plural, or dual, form, it can be understood as the highest, most lofty, place. It is paired with the *אֶרֶץ* ('erets), alternately translated “earth”, “land” or what we call “soil”. At its most basic meaning it is that which is firm, or solid.

And now back to a very literal translation of verse 1:

“At first, the Mighty One carved out the most lofty places and the firm ground.”

Quite literally, then, God would have started to work on the “basic material” of what scientists tell us are so tiny that if they were “solid” as we think of things, they would be invisible. The solid stuff is held together by vibrations, in fact¹. The rest is what we call “space”, which it turns out is not “empty” at all. This, though, leads us to the second verse, in which we come to the condition of the *Earth* at moment before God activated “light”.

Referring again to my paraphrase:

“But everything was dark and chaotic. The Spirit stepped in to organize the chaos, using the laws of physics to form a huge ball of water.”

The Bible seems to support the option of creation having started at a “local” point rather than at remote locations simultaneously. This is also the evidence of modern science with the “big bang theory”. Whereas the secular science postulates the chaos of the beginning somehow self-forming into a orderly universe over eons of time, the process is not possible over any amount of time without “outside” force. Instead, let us examine what the Bible has to say on the matter—word for word!

¹ For easy reference to the science, here is a link to an encyclopedic article. As with all encyclopedias , check the references for more information. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quantum_field_theory

וְהָאֶרֶץ הָיְתָה
But the earth was

Verse 2 begins with a simple enough phrase: “And the earth was” or, perhaps, “became”. This does not offer much support to some “gap” in cosmic time, but when taken in context it also does not necessarily need to be billions of years. The point is that the earth is now in view. It is either only our local planet, or it is what became our local planet. If “everything” came to being in the same place, then everything “was” in what God, the Holy Spirit was to work with.

Back to the proposed nature of things as God began to work. In creating the universe in one place, all the “forces of nature” were not in play as yet. The tiny particles were so small that they could not interact with one another unless they had “instructions” in the form of vibrations or “waves”. Each of the approximately 10^{80} protons are force fields holding three “quarks” making up 0.03% of its space. Theoretically, a liquid, like water, is not compressible, so a “liquid” or fluid universe would be from one to thirty light years from center to the surface².

If this were to be the case, the words of Scripture describing the earth as “the deep” and “the waters” would be a good description. Recent inquiries into the nature of the universe are supporting the idea that the “early universe” was in a fluid state (a plasma rather than “liquid” form of matter)³. Can this be supported by the text in front of us?

תְּהוֹ וְבוֹהוּ
Formless and Empty

This Hebrew rhyming pair (*tohu* and *bohu*) provides the reader with an idea of a vast wilderness with no discernible limits. It is a wasteland with no life to be found anywhere. This seems to be a description of a “cloud” with no gravity in affect. A vapor, or a plasma, would close in only by a pressure from the “outside”. This influence is well described as the “Wind of God” (in this case, probably the Spirit of God) hovering over this mass.

2 This was proposed over twenty years ago by Russell Humphreys (<https://answersingenesis.org/astronomy/cosmology/dr-russ-humphreys-a-young-earth-relativistic-cosmology/>)

3 That Dr. Humphreys was not an out-lier, Discovery Magazine carried a story proposing a super-fluid early universe as well seen here: <http://discovermagazine.com/1996/nov/liquiduniverse925>

וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם
And darkness on the face of the deep
עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם
Over the face of the Waters

As this was before light, it stands to reason that the universe (or earth) was a very dark place. This probably reflects the fact that in the early creation, the fundamental forces were just beginning. As things were put together by God, He would have “activated” them in order: strong force, weak force, electromagnetic force, and finally gravity. The wavelength of visible light is between 300 and 700 nanometers, or one to two thousand times the diameter of a water molecule. This would allow “time” if needed, to set things in motion to complete the creation of the universe from what is called “the waters beneath” on day two.

Conclusion

Though this analysis of revealed knowledge and scientific speculation is just a start, this short paper can put those of us believers who hold to the literal nature of the creation story at ease. The “big bang” conjecture explains very little, for each step of building the universe requires a supernatural force to make it happen. It is my hope that these few thoughts can lead to a reasoned discussion of the nature of our beginnings.

To God be the Glory.